

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The present study examined whether the nature of the greeting between a writing assistant and a student influenced the subsequent rapport that developed over the course of the writing center session. Eighteen Oregon State University undergraduate and graduate students were greeted in one of three ways by two confederates: with a handshake and verbal introduction, with a verbal introduction only, or with a quick greeting without the handshake or verbal introduction. It was observed that handshaking resulted in marginally higher reported rapport compared to the introduction only and no introduction conditions. Finally, the overall impression of the writing assistant as a person increased significantly from pre-session reports to post-session reports, and was unaffected by greeting condition.

Key Words: Rapport, Writing Center, First Impressions

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Greeting Styles and the Establishment of Rapport in a University Writing Center

by

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Dean, University Honors College

I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorized release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Tawnya Redding, Author

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## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this project to my mom and dad, who faithfully support me in everything I do; my sister Cassandra, who is both my best friend and my greatest rival; my grandma and grandpa, who instilled in me a passion for learning; and my grey-haired lady with glasses, who always taught me to live life to the fullest. You've helped me become the person I am, and inspired me to become the person I wish to be.

## **Greeting Styles and the Establishment of Rapport in a University Writing Center**

Rapport is an important aspect of any interpersonal interaction. Teachers try to develop rapport with their students, clinicians try to develop it with their patients, and tutors try to develop it with their fellow students (Lunsford, 1991). The importance of nonverbal behavior in first impressions and thin slice impressions has been well documented in teacher-student situations (e.g. Babad, Bernieri, & Rosenthal, 1989) as well as dyad interactions (e.g. Bernieri & Grahe, 1999), but what about in tutoring situations? Can rapport be developed on something as simple as a handshake?

Writing Centers are an integral aspect of the tutoring system of many universities and colleges across the United States (North, 1984). While the primary concern of the students that visit a Writing Center is the improvement of their current paper, the goal of a Writing Center and its tutors is to improve the writer beyond the project they bring to the table (North, 1984). As North (1984) so aptly put it, the job of a writing tutor “is to produce better writers, not better writing.” To do this, a writing tutor, or writing assistant, must observe and participate in the writing process of the student and are charged with changing it, interjecting where necessary in the hopes of developing the student as a writer (North, 1984). Progress can come during almost any writing session, but any tutor will tell you the process is most successful when they “hit it off” with the student. Lunsford (1991) talks of Writing Centers as challenging the status quo of higher education in that they encourage collaboration among writing assistant and writer. According to Lunsford (1991), collaboration not only leads to problem finding and solving, but promotes excellence, engages the student and encourages active learning, and leads to higher achievement in general. A Writing Center is a collaborative

environment where the process is more important than the product and the goal of furthering the student as a writer is often lost when this air of collaboration is not present.

What Lunsford describes as collaboration could be termed rapport. Rapport is an aspect of the quality of an interaction between two or more people (Bernieri, 2005). A critical feature of rapport is that the interactants feel a sense of unity, which is often expressed with such terms as harmony, coordination, and accord (Bernieri, 2005).

Rapport is different from many person specific constructs in that it is defined at the dyad or group level, yet the perception of rapport seems to occur in a manner similar to the judgments of other constructs (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999).

The importance of nonverbal behavior in rapport was emphasized in work by Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990). Following a meta-analysis of the existing literature, Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) developed a nonverbal model of rapport which includes three distinct components that when taken together best describe what is meant by the term rapport. The three essential components of rapport are mutual attention, positivity, and coordination between the participants, all three of which were found to have established nonverbal correlates. These components may be particularly important when working in a collaborative environment. This is especially true in tutoring situations, where interactions are typically considered a success when both participants are engaged (mutual attention), collaborating (coordination), and the interaction is positive (positivity) (Lunsford, 1991). While Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) did not argue that rapport was determined exclusively through nonverbal behavior, they did contend that it was revealed most strongly through the visual nonverbal channels.

Studies have also found the construct of rapport to be highly visible, as judges in



these “thin slice” studies were able to perceive rapport in as little as 30 seconds (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). The cues that influence the development of rapport in interactional contexts have long been the subject of psychological study (e.g. Puccinelli, Tickle-Degnen, & Rosenthal, 2003). Bernieri, Gillis, Davis, and Grahe (1996) examined the behavioral cues that were valid indicators of rapport in different situational contexts. Researchers found that cues such as mutual silence, posture shifts, and proximity were indicative of rapport in debates, while cues such as expressivity, posture shifts, and synchrony were indicative of rapport in cooperative situations (Bernieri et al., 1996). As a result, rapport appears to be a construct determined mainly through nonverbal means, but just what those cues are is highly dependent on the context of the interaction.

Many studies have supported the importance of nonverbal behavior in the development of rapport (e.g. Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Grahe and Bernieri (1999), for example, found that rapport is assessed more accurately using the nonverbal channels of communication. In their study, 115 students were asked to judge dyadic rapport and assigned to one of five channels of communication: video and transcript, video without audio, audio, transcript only, or video and audio. Researchers found that perceivers with access to the nonverbal channels, and especially the visual channel, were more accurate in their judgments of rapport (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). As a result, nonverbal cues appear to be an extremely important feature in the establishment and perception of rapport in dyadic interactions.

While many studies have focused on rapport using thin slices of an interaction, other studies have used thin slices to look at impression formation (e.g. Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). This is especially true in studies of social judgment accuracy. While

rapport is a construct defined at the dyadic level (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999), an impression of another's internal disposition concerns the individual as opposed to the quality of the interaction they are experiencing with that individual. Many studies on judgment accuracy have shown that perceivers are able to make judgments of others at zero or little acquaintance, and often fairly accurately (e.g. Borkenau & Liebler, 1992; McLarney-Vosotski, Bernieri, & Rempala, 2006). Borkenau and Liebler (1992) videotaped targets while entering and walking through a room, sitting down, looking into the camera, and reading a standard test. Judges were then shown one of four conditions: still shot, audio only, full video, or video without sound, and asked to judge targets on personality traits and physical attributes. The results indicated that ratings were most valid for extraversion and conscientiousness, two constructs inferred mainly with visual cues such as adventurous/cautious and fussy/careless (Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). This finding suggests that observers rely on visual cues when forming first impressions, and thus can be accurate when judging cues that can be inferred using the visual channel of communication. Thus, not only do individuals form judgments about others within seconds, but judgments are inferred from the things the perceivers can see and detect within those seconds. This may include dress, facial expression and smiling, as well as speed and manner of target movement (Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). Based on this research, it is likely that students entering a Writing Center will likewise be influenced immediately by the nonverbal behavior of the writing assistant who greets them.

Similarly, other studies have supported the notion that personality dispositions can be quickly determined through the visual channel (e.g. McLarney-Vesotski et al., 2006; Bernieri et al., 1996). McLarney-Vesotski et al. (2006) found that extraversion is

the trait children learn to detect accurately first, perhaps because it is the most observable. Bernieri et al. (1996) reported similar findings in their study of judgments of rapport. They found that the perception and judgment of rapport were primarily driven by expressivity, as well as the quantity and extremity of behavior (Bernieri et al., 1996). As a result, it would seem that expressivity is the most salient and accessible cue for social perceivers, and that perceivers are prone to weight expressivity disproportionately when making judgments about rapport.

One form of expressive behavior that is often present when making social judgments at initial meetings and greetings are handshakes. Handshaking is a commonly used greeting behavior and is often one of the first observations individuals make of each other, and as a result, may form the basis for many first impressions. Chaplin, Phillips, Brown, Clanton, and Stein (2000) provide one of the few studies that attempts to explore the link between the perception of an individual's personality and their handshake. After shaking the hand of four confederates, participants rated the handshake with a 1 to 5 scale on such dimensions as cold/warm, long/brief, weak/strong, and no eye contact/direct eye contact. The results of this study indicate that those with a firm handshake (characterized by strength, vigor, duration, eye contact, and completeness of grip) were thought to be more extraverted, emotionally expressive, and open to experience (only for women), and were also thought of as less shy or neurotic (Chaplin et al., 2000). The results of this study indicate that writing assistants who shake hands during the initial greeting, especially if they have a firm handshake, will also be seen more favorably by the students they work with.

Prickett, Gada-Jain, and Bernieri (2000) combined impression formation and

greeting behavior in their study of the impact of first impressions in a job interview. Previous research has suggested that first impressions do not change significantly over the course of an interaction (e.g. Anderson, 1965). While Pickett (2000) did not specifically target handshaking, researchers hypothesized that the final evaluations made by interviewers would be largely based in their first impression of the interviewee. Furthermore, researchers suspected that these first impressions would most likely be formed at the initial handshake and introduction (Prickett et al., 2000). To test these predictions, naïve observers were shown only the initial greeting between interviewer and interviewee, which began when the interviewee knocked on the door and ended 10 seconds after the interviewee was seated. Consistent with the researchers' predictions, the results of this study suggest that interviewer impressions of interviewees after the interview did not change significantly from those formed at the initial greeting, as naïve observers watching the thin slice of the greeting were able to predict the post-interview assessment made by interviewers. Thus, it would seem that the initial impression of a perceiver may not change significantly over the course of an interaction, and that the first impression may be heavily influenced by visual nonverbal cues. In the context of the Writing Center, the results of this study suggest that students' impressions of the writing assistant will not be significantly different from their initial impression.

### **The Present Study**

The present study seeks to determine whether a greeting can influence rapport development. Previous research has suggested that initial impressions do not change significantly over the course of an interaction, and that the first impression may be heavily influenced by visual nonverbal cues (e.g. Anderson, 1965; Prickett et al., 2000).

Rapport is a construct established mainly through nonverbal means (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999), and specifically, through the visual channel in situations of little or zero acquaintance (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990; Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). Similarly, research on impression formation has shown that first impressions are largely based on expressive, nonverbal behavior (Borkenau & Liebler, 1992; Bernieri et al., 1996). One such expressive behavior is handshaking, and studies have shown that those with a strong handshake were perceived as more extraverted, emotionally expressive, open to experience (for women), and as less neurotic compared to those with a weak handshake (Chaplin et al., 2000). Based on the previous research, it is hypothesized that handshaking would have a favorable impact on the development of rapport. To explore this relationship, the present study compared three different greeting styles of writing assistants meeting students – handshake and introduction by name, introduction by name only, and neither handshake nor introduction – all of which occur naturally in the Writing Center. It was predicted that handshake greetings would generate the most rapport and no introduction greetings would generate the least.

## **Method**

### *Overview*

Participants were greeted in one of three ways by two female confederate writing assistants: (a) with a handshake and verbal introduction, (b) a verbal introduction only, or (c) neither. In the third condition the writing assistant was allowed to greet the participant in any way they chose as long as they did not shake the participant's hand or introduce themselves by name. The participant completed a first impression questionnaire and then continued with the writing session. Writing sessions lasted from a half hour to an hour,

depending upon the length of the participant's paper. After the session, the participant completed a routine computer based survey administered by the Writing Center and a post-session questionnaire developed for this study that assessed the rapport felt by the student as well as their impression of the writing assistant following the session.

### *Participants*

Students making an appointment with the Oregon State University Writing Center to get help with a paper were recruited as research participants. The study was presented as research being done by the Writing Center in order to best know how to serve students. Potential participants were asked at the time of their appointment if they would be willing to take part in the study. Nineteen Oregon State University undergraduate and graduate students volunteered to participate in this study. One participant was removed from the study due to interference by another writing assistant following the greeting.

### *Procedure*

Two students hired to work in the Oregon State University Writing Center as tutors, known as writing assistants, served as confederates for this study. Participants were greeted in one of three ways by the confederate writing assistant: a) by shaking the student's hand and introducing themselves by name, b) by introducing themselves by name only, or c) by simply giving a quick greeting (e.g. "Hi") before beginning the session. The writing assistants were required to give only their first name for the handshake and introduction and introduction only conditions. All other aspects of the greeting were left to the writing assistant to do as they naturally would. Writing assistants were not blind to the expected results of the study. However, both writing assistants greeted each participant in a friendly and polite manner no matter the condition, and thus

it is unlikely that the writing assistants invited the predicted results of the researcher.

Immediately following the greeting, the participant filled out a pre-session questionnaire before the session got underway. Depending on the length of the writing assignment, either a 30 minute or hour session followed the greeting and initial questionnaire. Writing sessions typically consisted of reading the paper out loud, which was generally followed by a discussion of the concerns of the student and writing assistant about the writing project. The writing session itself was not manipulated in any way. The participant filled out the two post-session questionnaires following the session. Although questionnaires were handed out by the writing assistants, they were not present while questionnaires were filled out by the participant. Both questionnaires were filled out at the desk where the writing session took place while the writing assistant was not in the room and were returned to the research assistant to insure confidentiality.

### *Materials*

Participants were given three questionnaires: (a) a first impression assessment that measured the student's impressions of the writing assistant (appendix A), (b) a post-session assessment that measured the rapport achieved with the writing assistant as well as their impressions of the writing assistant following the session (appendix B), and (c) a computer based survey administered by the Writing Center that measured the student's overall experience at the Writing Center (appendix C). Assessment measures employed a nine point scale ranging from 0 to 8. The first impression assessment asked participants to describe their first impression of the writing assistant on politeness, warmth, trustworthiness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and professionalism. A post-session assessment measured each participant's evaluation of how well the session went (i.e.,

rapport). The items for measuring rapport were adapted from those employed in previous investigations (Bernieri, 2005; Gada, 1999). Participants were asked to rate the involvement, attentiveness, and responsiveness of the writing assistant. It also included the items from the pre-session questionnaire. Both questionnaires were filled out at the desk where the writing session took place while the confederate was not in the room and returned to the research assistant to insure confidentiality.

### Results

The seven rapport items measured for this analysis correlated positively with each other (Table 1). Internal consistency of the rapport composite was high, as measured by a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .93$ . Therefore, the average of the seven rapport measures was used as the rapport score for each participant.

Table 1  
*Rapport Item Intercorrelations*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Harmonious	-							
2. Satisfying	.82**	-						
3. Focused	.72**	.65**	-					
4. Friendly	.51*	.52*	.53*	-				
5. Attentiveness	.60**	.57*	.66**	.80**	-			
6. Responsiveness	.70**	.54*	.72**	.51*	.75**	-		
7. Involvement	.75**	.71**	.86**	.66**	.83**	.74**	-	
8. Rapport*	.88**	.83**	.86**	.73**	.85**	.84**	.93**	-

\* Rapport was calculated as the average of the preceding 7 items.

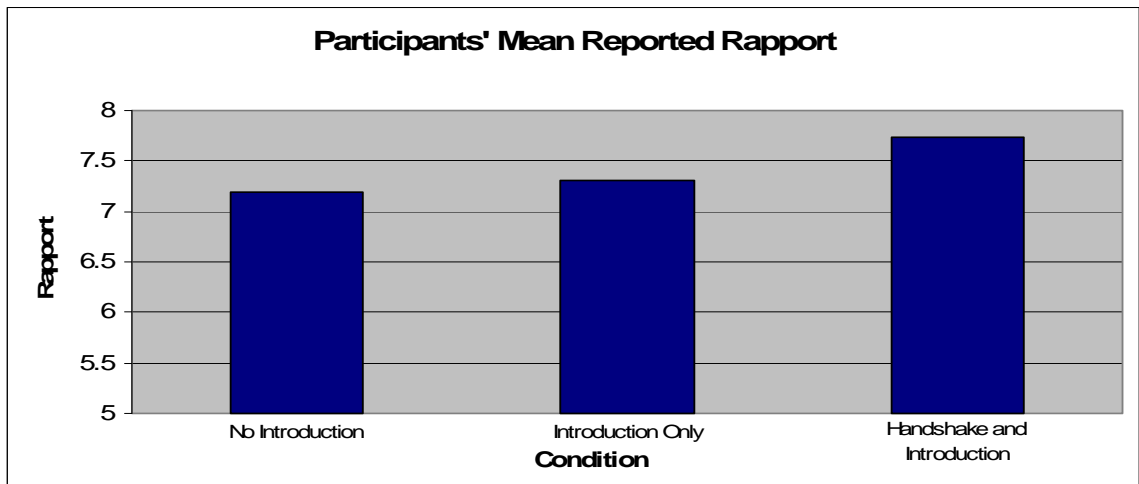
\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

It was predicted that *handshake greetings* would generate the most rapport and that the *no introduction* condition would generate the least. Reported rapport was extremely high for all conditions, but was slightly higher for the handshake condition ( $M = 7.74$ ,  $SD = .58$ ) compared to the introduction only condition ( $M = 7.31$ ,  $SD = .44$ ) and



no introduction condition ( $M = 7.19$ ,  $SD = .57$ ) (Figure 1). An ANOVA of reported rapport was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 15) = 1.76$ ,  $p > .05$ . However, a planned comparison single df contrast analysis testing the significance of the hypothesized linear trend across all three conditions was marginally significant,  $F(1, 16) = 3.32$ ,  $p < .10$  (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991).

Figure 1



Whereas the rapport assessment asked the participants about their interaction with the writing assistant, the impression assessments measured their perception of the writing assistant as a person. A Writing Center is a rare environment where the writing assistant is a peer of the students they tutor, and as such they are expected to be both professional and approachable. The six items of the impression assessment were chosen to reflect this relationship context, and to assess the students' impression of both the professionalism (as depicted in the items on professionalism, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness) as well as the approachability every successful tutor must possess (as depicted in the items on politeness, warmth, and agreeableness). Essentially, the items chosen closely echo the dimensions most crucial to a successful writing assistant, and a score of all 8's would echo the ideal demeanor of a peer writing tutor. An item/total correlation performed with

these six items correlated positively with each other (Table 2). Internal consistency of the pre-post impression composites were high, as measured by a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .92$  for the initial impressions and  $\alpha = .97$  for the post-session impressions.

Table 2<sup>1</sup>  
*Post-session Impression Item Intercorrelations*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Politeness	-						
2. Warmness	.77**	-					
3. Trustworthiness	.77**	1.00**	-				
4. Agreeableness	.84**	.93**	.93**	-			
5. Conscientiousness	.89**	.81**	.81**	.89**	-		
6. Professionalism	.77**	.85**	.85**	.77**	.68*	-	
7. Post-impression*	.91**	.96**	.96**	.96**	.92**	.88**	-

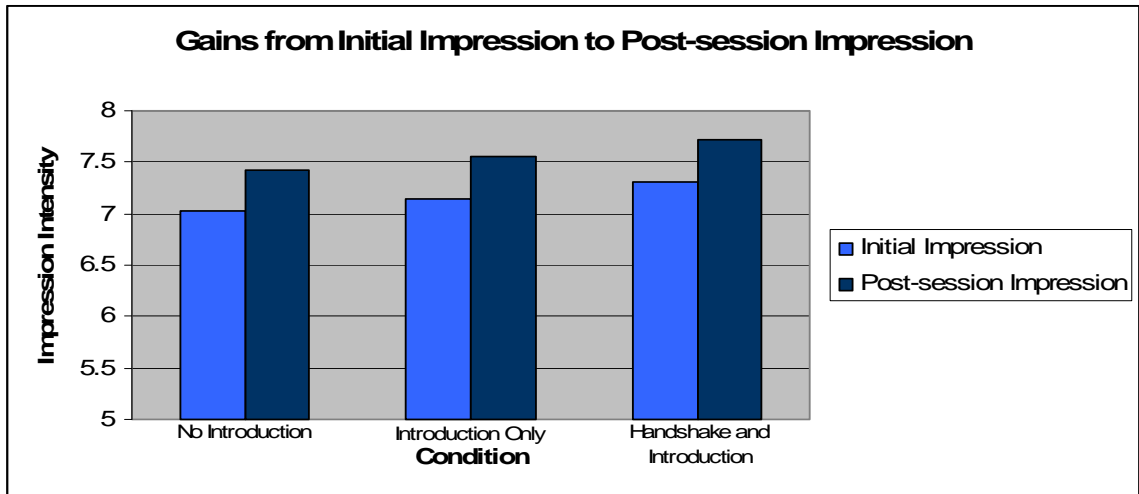
\* Post-session impressions were calculated as the average of the preceding 6 items.

\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Collapsing across all three conditions, it was predicted that post-session impressions of the writing assistant would not be significantly different from the initial impression due to previous research concerning primacy effects (Anderson, 1965). A repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant difference between pre-post impressions of the writing assistant,  $F(1, 15) = 4.70, p < .05$ . Furthermore, pre-post differences were similar across conditions as indicated by a non-significant interaction,  $F(2, 15) = 0.002, p > .05$ .

<sup>1</sup> Initial Impression Correlations were only slightly lower and thus will not be included.

Figure 2



### Discussion

The present results support but do not confirm the hypothesis that handshaking would result in the highest reported rapport and that no introduction would result in the lowest reported rapport. The data revealed that there was a linear relationship between the greeting condition and the rapport the student felt during the session, and the mean reported rapport for handshaking was marginally high compared to the introduction condition and no introduction condition (handshake, 7.74 vs. introduction, 7.31 and no introduction, 7.19). Student's impressions of the writing assistant did change significantly across the course of the session.

Although rapport for the handshake condition was high compared to the other two conditions, in general rapport was rated highly for all three conditions. Over a third of the sample had scores of 8, which was the maximum on the rapport scale. Thus, there is the possibility of a ceiling effect. One possible explanation for this might include participants feeling a social desirability effect, or wishing to respond in a manner that would be viewed favorably by researchers. While this is possible, participants were informed

before the greeting took place that their scores would not be seen by the writing assistant, and the writing assistant was not present while assessments were filled out. It is also possible that writing assistants may have been behaving differently depending on the condition, as they were not blind to the experimental hypothesis. A more likely explanation is the personality characteristics of the two writing assistants, as both are extremely agreeable and likable individuals. As a result, participants were greeted in a warm and friendly manner no matter the condition, and thus it would seem that most participants would like the writing assistant and enjoy the interaction with them whether they shook their hand or not.

Another limitation is the fact that only female writing assistants were used. There is a cultural expectation for men to shake hands more than women in greeting situations (Bernieri & Petty, 2005), and numerous popular media sources stress the importance of a handshake in making a good first impression (Demarais & White, 2004; <http://www.howtothings.com/business/how-to-make-a-good-first-impression-at-job-interviews>, [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4716071\\_first-impression-during-job-interview.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4716071_first-impression-during-job-interview.html)). While commonly seen in a business environment, in casual situations handshaking may be more frequently used by men than women (Bernieri & Petty, 2005). Furthermore, men become accustomed to this greeting at an early age and thus have significantly more practice at handshaking than do women (Bernieri & Petty, 2005). As a result, handshaking may be more important in establishing a good first impression for men than for women simply because it is not expected from women in casual environments such as a Writing Center. In other words, a male writing assistant who does not shake the hand of a student may be looked at less favorably than a female who does

not shake hands, and students may feel less rapport with the male writing assistant because of the less than favorable first impression. If this is so, the high means for rapport across conditions may also be because other aspects of a greeting, such as a smile and a personable personality, are more imperative for a female writing assistant to make a good first impression and develop rapport than is a handshake.

Previous research has found that those with a firm handshake are seen more positively than those who do not (Chaplin et al., 2000). This finding suggests that simply handshaking is not enough for a good first impression. Rather, it is a *good* handshake that is likely responsible for facilitating rapport. Due to individual differences in personality, social anxiety, culture, and experience, it is likely that the present results might not generalize to everyone. For example, whereas handshaking is a greeting behavior common in western cultures, this is often not the case in non-western cultures (Sue & Sue, 1977). The Writing Center is a very diverse environment, and employs writing assistants with a wide variety of personalities and cultural backgrounds. The two writing assistants used in this study were individuals of the same gender, cultural background, had similar personalities, and appeared to have a typical handshake, and because of this may have constituted a special sample of the entire population of writing assistants. Similarly, a large portion of the students who use the Writing Center are non-native speakers. Because this study was conducted with only North American native English speaking students, the results can only be said to generalize to the native English speaking students who use the Writing Center. With more and more non-native speaking students visiting the Writing Center, the western greeting behavior of a handshake may not have the same effect on the development of rapport. Future research should explore

the effects of greeting styles on the development of rapport with non-native English speakers, as well as a wider variety of writing assistants, to determine if a handshake has the same effect across cultures and personalities.

A further limitation of this study was the lack of a standard script for each condition. The study was designed to be as naturalistic as possible in order to accurately reflect the real environment of the Writing Center. As a result, only the greeting the writing assistant used was standardized, not how they chose to carry out the greeting. In other words, writing assistants did not have a standard script to follow, and were told to fulfill the requirements of the condition in any way they chose (handshake and introduction by name, introduction only, or neither). Both writing assistants were very personable and agreeable, and as such greeted each student positively and with a smile no matter the condition. However, because there was no standard script for writing assistants researchers cannot rule out the possibility of confounding variables that may have been partially responsible for the higher ratings for rapport in the handshake condition. Furthermore, neither of the two confederate writing assistants were naturally inclined to shake hands, and as a result they almost certainly did not have enough practice at handshaking to develop what Chaplin et al. (2000) calls the firm handshake (characterized by strength, vigor, duration, eye contact, and completeness of grip). However, despite the lack of standardization and practice shaking hands, both writing assistants were given higher scores for rapport and pre-post impressions when they shook the students' hand. Thus, while handshaking marginally increases the impression of the writing assistant and the rating of rapport, researchers cannot be certain what it is about the handshake condition that results in the increased ratings. Future research should look

at potential confounding variables that may affect the relationship between greeting and rapport, such as writing assistant personality and gender, to discern what it is about shaking a student's hand that results in their higher rating of both the writing assistant and the interaction with that writing assistant.

One final limitation of this study concerns the similarity of the scores on the post-impression assessment to that of the rapport assessment. Scores on the post-impression assessment correlated more strongly with the rapport assessment ( $r = .69$ ) than the initial impression assessment ( $r = .41$ ), which implies that these three assessments may have been measuring the same construct. However, the rapport assessment asked participants to rate the interaction they experienced with the writing assistant rather than the writing assistant as an individual. Thus, while it is possible to have an initial impression of the writing assistant, and an impression of them following the session, the interactional construct of rapport could only be assessed following the interaction. Despite the similarity in scores on the post-impression and rapport assessments, both were needed to measure the separate but related constructs of student impressions of the writing assistant and the interaction they experienced with them.

Despite this difference in the constructs of rapport and pre-post impressions, it is possible that participants may have treated the rapport assessment and the post-session impression assessment as the same variable, as scores on the rapport scale closely mirrored those on the post-impression assessment. While this may have been the case in some instances, it also follows that the more rapport one feels during a session the more favorably they would rate the individual with whom they felt the rapport. This may be especially true when two individuals are unacquainted with each other, as their

relationship is practically defined by the level of rapport within their interaction (Bernieri, 2005). As a result, it seems that an individual who rates the interaction higher on the rapport scale would also give a higher rating on the post-impression scale, and conversely, a lower rapport rating should correlate with a lower post-impression rating. In other words, rapport and impression of the writing assistant should be related theoretically and therefore rated similarly, even if they are not the same construct.

### **Conclusion**

Can rapport be developed on something as simple as a handshake? While handshaking is certainly not the only relevant factor in the establishment of rapport in the Writing Center, it appeared to contribute something in this study. Not only did the handshake condition result in the highest reported rapport, but writing assistants were rated more highly on both the initial impression assessment and the post-session impression assessment when they shook the students hand during the greeting. Furthermore, there were equal and significant gains across all conditions from the initial impression to the post-session impression. This could have serious implications for writing assistants, for the results indicate that it may be difficult to make up ground following a bad start. Writing assistants were rated more highly initially when they shook the students hand than if they did not. Because of the equal gains across conditions, the post-session impression remained relatively higher for those students who had their hand shook compared to those who did not. Ultimately, the results indicate that the tone of the session will be set from the greeting, and sessions that begin with a bad greeting will most likely end with the student feeling less rapport development and having a lower overall impression of their writing assistant. These results are consistent with previous



research on primacy effects, in which first impressions form the bases for lasting impressions of an individual (e.g. Anderson, 1965; Asch, 1946).

The results of this study carry some significant implications for the Oregon State University Writing Center. While the goal of the Writing Center is to develop the student as a writer, there is currently no measurement in place to assess whether or not students are actually becoming better writers. Instead, the success of the Writing Center is measured with the satisfaction of the students who use it, as they are asked to rate both their writing assistant and their overall experience following each session. Thus, at the heart of the Writing Center is the goal of making the students feel welcome, to collaborate on writing projects, and to develop rapport during writing sessions. As a result, writing tutors need not only be concerned about the help they provide the student with writing, but with their efforts to develop rapport and collaboration during the session. The data reported here suggest that handshaking may be one such way to get a jump-start on the development of rapport in the Writing Center, and may be especially important for those tutors with more reserved personalities. It seems that in the Writing Center you really do never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

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## Appendix A`

### Pre-Session Greeting Assessment

**Please rate your impression of the writing assistant.**

not polite	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	extremely polite
not warm	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	extremely warm
not trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	extremely trustworthy
not agreeable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	extremely agreeable
not conscientious	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	extremely conscientious
not professional	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	extremely professional

\*Reserve a score of 8 or 0 for someone matching the most polite (or not) person you know

## Appendix B

### Post-Session Assessment

Please rate the *interaction* you just experienced between you and the writing assistant on each of the characteristics listed.

not at all					extremely					The interaction was:
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		1. Harmonious/Cooperative
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		2. Satisfying/Worthwhile
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		3. Focused/Active
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		4. Friendly/Positive

**Attentiveness:** Listening carefully and not being distracted during the writing session.

low attentiveness 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 high attentiveness

**Responsiveness:** Responding quickly and appropriately, and carefully and thoughtfully answering the questions asked.

Low responsiveness 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 high responsiveness

**Involvement:** The extent to which the writing assistant took part, was interested and concerned, and was committed to the purpose of the writing session.

low involvement 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 high involvement

**Please rate your impression of the writing assistant.**

not polite 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 extremely polite

not warm 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 extremely warm

not trustworthy 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 extremely trustworthy

not agreeable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 extremely agreeable

not conscientious 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 extremely conscientious

not professional 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 extremely professional

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Note: Measures 1-4 adapted from: Bernieri, F. J. (2005). The Expression of Rapport. In V. Manusov (Ed.). *Beyond Words: A sourcebook of methods for measuring nonverbal cues* (pp. 247-259). Mahwah, NJ: LEA. Rest adapted from Gada (1999).

## Appendix C`

### Writing Center Session Evaluation Student Feedback

Please fill out the following form (Required fields are indicated with a red asterisk).

**Please provide your name and OSU network ID:**

\*First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ \*Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ \*OSU Net ID  
(ONID): \_\_\_\_\_

**\*When was your appointment?**

- a) Morning (Start time between 9am and 12pm)
- b) Afternoon (Start time between 12pm and 4pm)
- c) Evening (Start time after 4pm)

**What is your major?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What class was this project for? (e.g., WR 121)** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*What is your class standing? (or relationship to OSU)** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Are you a native speaker of English?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

**Please answer the following questions about today's session:**

**A. Is this your first time using the Writing Center?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

**How did you find out about the Writing Center?**

- a) Presentation in class
- b) Faculty/Staff referral
- c) Flyer
- d) Friend
- e) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*B. Approximately how often do you use the Writing Center?**

- a) Once a week or more
- b) Every two weeks
- c) Once a month
- d) Once a quarter
- e) Once a year
- f) Today is my first time

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Note: Taken from: <http://www.cwl.oregonstate.edu/yellowcard>

**C. Do you think you will use the Writing Center again?**

- a) Yes
- b) I'm not sure
- c) No (Why not?)\_\_\_\_\_

**\*D. Please check each of the following activities you worked on today:**

- a) Organization
- b) Content
- c) Grammar
- d) Style
- e) Documentation
- f) Tone
- g) Brainstorming
- h) Transitions/Flow

**E. Which of the above activities did you find most helpful?\_\_\_\_\_**

**Please evaluate your session by responding to the following:**

**\*F. My writing assistant responded appropriately to my concerns as a writer.**

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) Somewhat Agree
- d) Disagree
- e) Strongly Disagree

**\*G. Will you continue working on this writing assignment after this session?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

**If yes, please respond to the following:**

**This writing session was helpful in preparing me to continue working on this writing project.**

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) Somewhat Agree
- d) Disagree
- e) Strongly Disagree

**\*H. Overall, how would you evaluate your appointment?**

- a) Very Helpful
- b) Helpful
- c) Not helpful

**I. Any comments or questions for us?**